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STATINTL

# Kennedy Backs Fulbright Stand Against Military Role in Politics

## President Cites Wise Actions of Authors of Constitution and Says Step Keeps Officers From Being 'Exploited'

By E. W. KENWORTHY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 10—President Kennedy put himself squarely on the side of Senator J. W. Fulbright today in limiting the political activities of military officers.

The President said that, in his judgment, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had "performed a service" when he sent a memorandum to Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in June calling attention to efforts by some officers to propagandize the public.

In that memorandum Mr. Fulbright pointed out that these officers evidently interpreted a 1955 directive of the National Security Council as warrant for making use of "radical Right-wing speakers" in public "seminars" or "freedom forums." The directive said that it was Government policy to use military personnel and material to alert the public to the menace of the "cold war."

Mr. Kennedy indicated today in his news conference that the directive was being re-written.

He said: "I think it is an obligation upon those who played those responsibilities upon them [the military] to clarify it in such a way that the common interest is protected." [Question 7, Page 6].

Fulbright Under Fire

Several Senators and Representatives have variously accused Mr. Fulbright of making an "insidious attack" on the officer corps, trying to "gag" it, and of mounting a "clandestine assault on the fundamental foundations of our Republic."

In response to a request for comment on this controversy at his news conference, Mr. Kennedy said:

"The United States military, due to one of the wisest actions of our Constitutional founders, have been kept out of politics, and they continue their responsibilities, regardless of the changes of Administration."

This, the President continued, is not only "a most important protection for our country" but it is also "an equally important protection for the military." He said that it prevented them "from being exploited or discriminated against by political parties."

"So therefore," the President

said, "the problem always is how can the military remain removed from political life and how can civilian control of the military be effectively maintained and at the same time the military have the right and necessity to express their educated views on some of the great problems that face us around the world."

This was essentially the point made by Mr. Fulbright that had drawn fire from Senator Strom Thurmond, Democrat of South Carolina, Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, Senator Karl E. Mundt, Republican of South Dakota, and Representative Dale Alford, Democrat of Arkansas. Mr. Alford is expected to run against Mr. Fulbright in the primary next year.

Mr. Fulbright had said: "There has been a strong tradition in this country that it is not the function of the military to educate the public on political issues."

Speakers' Views

The "radical Right-wing speakers" who took advantage of the community forums sponsored by the military, Mr. Fulbright said in his memorandum, attributed current "difficulties" to "softness."

Moreover, the memorandum to Mr. McNamara said that the nature of the Communist threat often is developed by equating social legislation with socialism, and the latter with communism.

In this way, he said, "much of the Administration's domestic legislative program, including continuation of the income tax, expansion of Social Security (particularly medical care under Social Security), Federal aid to education, and other programs, are characterized as steps toward communism."

Mr. Thurmond expressed regret today that the President apparently favored modification of the directive. He said there was "not a shred of evidence" that military personnel were attempting to usurp "making functions from civilian authorities."

"I do not believe," he said, "that the military is attempting to usurp functions from civilian authorities."